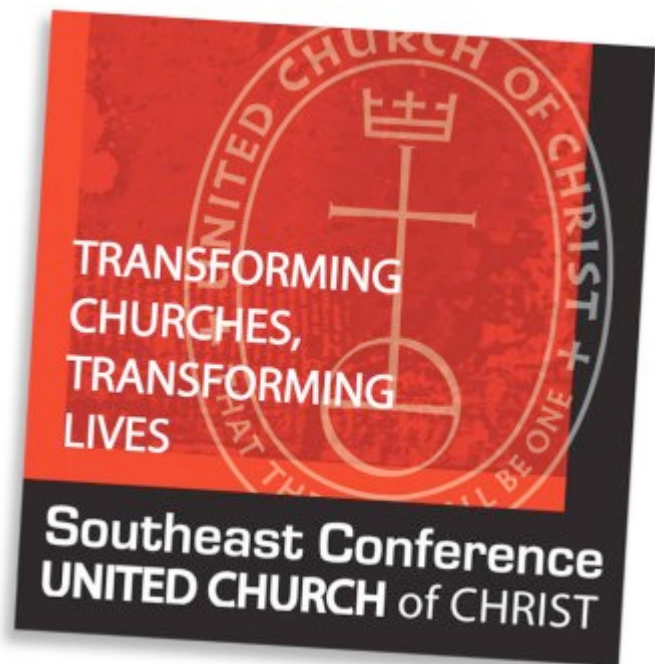


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## Searching for a Designated Conference Minister

Exciting news! The Southeast Conference is looking for a Designated Conference Minister—a Conference minister “designated” for a time and a purpose. This person, called by God and the Conference, will serve as the spiritual and administrative leader of the Southeast Conference, helping us to envision the future that God intends for us in the Conference and in the Region and living with us into that future. Our ideal candidate is a visionary, a communicator, a leader, a motivator, and an administrator.

During the next few years, the Southeast Conference along with other conferences in the Region will explore transforming the way the tasks now delegated to the Conferences are structured & staffed, with the ultimate goal of sustaining thriving local and regional ministries. At the end of the term, the position of Conference Minister for the Southeast Conference may no longer exist or may be radically changed. The Conference Minister we call for the next three years (with a possible extension to 5



years) will need to be open to a future that is uncharted.

[Click here to find more information on our search process](#), [peruse our Conference Profile](#), and [listen to a poem performed by one of our members](#). Search your heart and see if God might be calling you to the Southeast Conference!

In Christ's peace,  
The Southeast Conference Search Committee

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## Hymn Singing...During Committee Meeting?



I've had the privilege of serving as a delegate on the committee tasked with considering General Synod Resolution #11, "Restructuring Conference Boundaries." The title is a bit misleading, as the resolution's purpose is really to encourage Conferences to have vigorous conversation about how to revitalize Conferences to better fulfill their missions and ministries as part of Christ's body in the UCC. Avenues for

revitalization include sharing resources among Conferences, "out of the box" thinking about partnerships with other Conferences and their covenant partners (and even other denominations), and potentially reconfiguring Conference boundaries, all drawing on the resources and facilitative ability of the National Setting. Per the Constitution of the UCC, any reconfiguration of Conference boundaries would have to begin at the Conference level and later be approved by a future General Synod.

I'm proud to say that the Southeast Conference is ahead of the curve on these conversations—on dreaming and visioning how we might more creatively and effectively steward our resources to better serve our local churches in their mission to transform lives and communities. I was able to share with the committee that the SEC is in the process of calling a Conference Minister who will be Designated specifically to help us have that conversation and envision our future outside the box. I was also able to share that as part of the Southern Region, the SEC just received a \$10,000 grant to develop a regional website that will serve as the landing page for each of our Conferences and act as an evangelism tool for anyone in the South who—like many!—are not familiar with the welcome & witness of the UCC but are interested in getting to know us.

Our committee worked to ensure that our resolution conveyed the urgency of rethinking how we can best support the church's mission while grounding any changes in local churches, Associations, and Conferences. We also created a mechanism for resourcing from and accountability to and with the National setting. I was "volun-told" to help refine the language of the resolution and thoroughly enjoyed the adrenaline rush of rewriting a complex document in tandem with two other delegates in under 15 minutes! It was a pleasure to collaborate with a diverse group of people who worked passionately and in (relative) concert to bring forth this vital statement. We even shared in a rousing, harmonizing rendition of "I've Got Peace Like a River" while we waited for revised copies of the resolution to be printed. Not a common experience for committee work!

Another highlight of my time here at Synod: attending the (legal!) wedding of former Southeast Conference members David Sigmund and Jay Greaves officiated by SEC pastor Susannah Davis and GLBTQ rights activist and UCC minister Mel White. Jay & Dave's nuptials were powerfully witnessed by several hundred Synod attendees as well as news media and family & friends. Rev. Susannah reminded us that it's "just love," while Rev. Mel encouraged Dave & Jay to look to Christ and each other to strengthen their love of, and witness to, their communities and especially to those who feel no love.

And of course, morning runs on the California beach and evening fellowship with SEC members and friends top off this quirky, sometimes fractious but always joyous family reunion. Thank you for sending me as one of your delegates!


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### About Leah Lyman Waldron

Leah Lyman Waldron is the co-pastor of Praxis UCC, a funky, progressive new church start in Atlanta, GA and she currently serves as a chaplain resident at Children's

 Healthcare of Atlanta. She has been happily roped into helping to teach the SEC's online UCC History & Polity class; serving on the Conference search committee for a new Designated Conference Minister; serving as an SEC delegate to General Synod 29; and working ad interim on Search & Call for the Conference. She loves cooking vegan food and watching Dr. Who with her husband & co-pastor Chris.

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## Another UCC First... new environmental resolution from Synod



Passed by General Synod 29 delegates on Monday July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 at the Long Beach Convention Center was a resolution that calls for the UCC to divest of any Fossil Fuel companies in it's investment funds. This resolution is the "first of it's kind" by any national faith community.

This resolution calls for divestment by June 2018, which directly affects the strategies of our UCC United Church funds and the Pension Board. Both entities supported the resolution.

There was, however, some opposition on the debate floor to the resolution, primarily from the delegations from Montana, Wyoming and Kentucky. These states economies are tied to the fossil fuel companies.

The resolution, originally brought to General Synod by the Massachusetts Conference, was passed by 72.5% of the delegates. According to Rev. Jim Antal, the major proponent, "this resolution will become a model for all faith communities who care about God's creation and recognize the urgent scientific mandate to keep at least 80% of the known oil, gas and coal reserves in the ground.... This vote expresses our commitment to the future. By this vote, we are amplifying our conviction with our money."

Next step is, by General Synod 2015 in Cleveland, for United Church Funds and shareholders to research fossil fuel-free investment vehicles and to identify "best in class" fossil fuel companies.

Additionally, delegates also passed a resolution on making UCC church building more carbon-neutral and to call on UCC congregations to conduct energy audits on their facilities as the first step toward carbon neutrality.



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### About Debbie Spearman

Debbie is the Generosity Coordinator for the Southeast Conference and enjoys assisting churches with stewardship and OCWM events. She is an active member of Central Congregational United Church of Christ in Atlanta, and has a long haired Dachshund

named Sidney.

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< Hymn Singing...During Committee Meeting?


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[WHO WE ARE](#)
[NEWS AND EVENTS](#)
[GIVING](#)
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[VITALITY AND GROWTH](#)
[CONTACT US](#)

## Resolution responds to violence in Honduras



A resolution calling for a response to “drug related gang violence in Honduras” was submitted to this General Synod by the Maine conference. The Maine Conference has worked in partnership for over a decade with our Honduran brothers and sisters in support of peace and justice.

The background for the resolution states, “In 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated the country of Honduras, putting an already struggling nation into turmoil. Widespread poverty and hunger puts Honduras as the second poorest country in Central America.” The political situation has now been compounded by a new challenge... ‘the threat of gang violence connected directly to the trafficking of illegal drugs that are eventually sold here in the United States’.

The resolution calls on pastors and congregations to stand in solidarity with our Honduran brothers and sisters...to be a voice for them as they seek peace and justice. This resolution calls the United Church of Christ to dispel the false impression that the use of drugs is a “victimless



crime.” We seek to clarify that the sale and consumption of illegal drugs here in the United States and Honduras has direct, tragic and often deadly consequences.

The resolution passed. The Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church encourages the churches of the United Church of Christ to call on our governmental leaders to reassess and recreate our U. S. Foreign policy to address the situation of human rights violations, illegal drug trafficking and violence that impact the quality of life for all those involved.

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### About Carrole Moss

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[General Synod recognizes the need for care of veterans](#) >

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## General Synod recognizes the need for care of veterans



At General Synod 29 in Long Beach, Calif., I served on committee to bring the resolution "To Recognize the Need for Compassionate Care and Healing to Our Veterans" to the floor for debate.

This proposed resolution drew quite a crowd during the Educational Intensive on Friday, June 28th. Many of the

members of this committee were veterans, like myself. The Rev. Stephen Boyd of the Chaplain's Office at the national level spoke at length about what the resolution would actually do, and that it had mainly in response to the huge loss of veterans from church life after they returned home from overseas tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He emphasized that, of the veterans who were regular churchgoers before they went out on combat tours, 85 percent did not return to church when they arrived home. From his interviews with returning veterans he relayed how they felt they could not reconcile what they had had to do in the field with their Christian teachings and beliefs. Not only did they fall away from the church in response to this, but the rate of suicide was shocking. Veterans had reported that no one who could really understand them except other

combat veterans, and that the Veterans Administration medical facilities would treat them for a while with therapy and medications, but before too long the VA turned them loose and wished them good luck, prior to stable recovery.

These reports were shocking, to say the least. Many of the veterans in the room spoke up about the proposed resolution, feeling that while it was certainly a worthwhile endeavor, it had no “meat” to it. Some, feeling that the resolution was mainly intended to aid Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, spoke feelingly about veterans of all conflicts, stretching back to World War II. Others spoke of how they had personally witnessed that the influx of veterans needing care was starting to overwhelm VA medical facilities. Veterans of conflicts further back were pushed further down, some felt, and they wanted to make sure the church as a whole was aware.

Something else that came to light was that not each veteran is given the same level of benefits and care after their active-duty military time is concluded. Even some of the UCC chaplains working in VA facilities were unaware of this. I was one of the ones who informed them about there being 8 different levels of care for veterans. They learned that what the public thinks – “a veteran is a veteran is a veteran” – is not accurate. Not all are treated the same. Some are treated better than others. Those with non-combat conditions are rated much lower than those who suffered wounds and other aftereffects from combat.

Armed with these thoughts and information, the delegates came to the committee meeting on Sunday, June 30th, much better informed, and able to strengthen, streamline and make concrete suggestions for the resolution. The changes that were agreed upon were then brought to the floor of General Synod on Monday, July 1st. Two of the strongest changes came with the insertion of one entirely new paragraph which gave direction to the Office of Local Church Ministries to partner with the Soul Repair Center of Brite Divinity School in the development of resources for use by our military chaplains, VA chaplains and in local congregations to express compassionate care and a healing ministry to veterans and their families.

The other strong change came in the next paragraph which in the streamlined language read:

“ *Be it finally resolved that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ challenges the members and local churches of the United Church of Christ to serve veterans with healing care beyond established medical and military protocols and seek ways to welcome our veterans home, through worship, fellowship, pastoral care and advocacy to reintegrate them in our communities, and help to bring peace to veterans, their families and the world.*

There was one minor amendment approved, and with a total of 776 votes cast, the resolution

was approved by 99.2 percent of the delegates.

I was overwhelmed with joy that the UCC had done this, being a Cold War and Vietnam-era veteran, and one whose father and father-in-law were both World War II veterans. The moderator then called on all veterans on the delegate floor to stand and be recognized. The delegations were most gracious in their thanks to all the veterans. Only one resolution, calling for an ecumenical relationship between the UCC and the United Church of Canada, received a higher approval vote, at 99.7 percent.

Upon reflection, I had looked forward to serving with this committee, and my voice, both as a veteran and a member of the Southeast Conference, was heard and noted, in the intensive, the committee work and by speaking in favor of the resolution on the floor of the House. Many veterans and chaplains spoke with me afterward on Friday and Sunday and in the days following, and we talked at length about the resolution and how we could take it further.

We were all happy to have once more served to aid other veterans, this time through the work of our church.

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#### About Jennifer Spears

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[< Resolution responds to violence in Honduras](#)

[Hymn Singing...During Committee Meeting? >](#)

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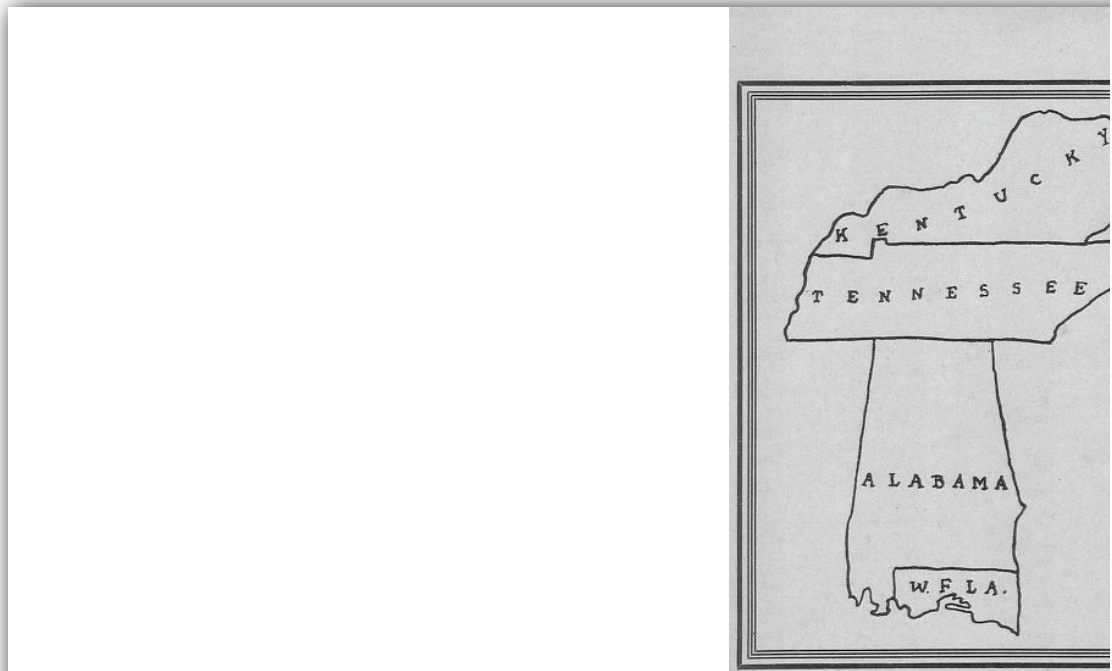
## **"Down South News" history will soon be available online**



Michael Stroud has been hard at work sorting through pictures and documents from the history of the Southeast Conference and placing them online. As part of the Project 66-16 initiative, he has scanned newsletters and documents going back to the days of the former Southeast Convention, back in 1952. Eventually, he plans to upload newsletters and transcripts up to the present time.

Michael has also created a Flickr page containing photos from the Conference archives. Many were used in the newsletters that were once published out of the office. They contain captions and brief descriptions. He'll continue to add new pictures over the next few months.

You can take a look at a sample newsletter here:



[Down South News, Congregational Christian Churches, June 1942](#)



You can take a look at the [Flickr page here](#).

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One Response to *"Down South News" history will soon be available online*



**Mike Stroud** June 28, 2013 at 1:32 pm #



Just an update, friends ... The pace is going somewhat slower on the uploads to Internet Archives that I would like, because some of the items are actually newsletters I am transcribing from copies that I obtained from sources other our Conference office, namely the Congregational Library in Boston. Because, quite obviously, I do not have rights to post items that are the property of another entity, I must reproduce them instead, which is somewhat time-consuming. In some other cases, namely in the 1980s and 1990s, the Conference used formats other than the typical 8 1/2 x 11" sheets, which means that I cannot fit some of them into a conventional home-use scanner. I have to reproduce several years' worth as a consequence. So your patience is requested, and I promise that it will be worth the wait.

Once these are all uploaded, Chris Lyman-Waldron, our Conference Communications Director, and I will probably begin carrying a "history corner" feature that will link to newsletters from 50, 25, and 10 years before the particular month. If you are searching for a particular item from your church that might have been published, I recommend downloading the month's issue and looking it up. One of these days, after Project 66-16 proper has concluded, I hope to compile an index of all the articles, but I do not have time for that now, so feel free to explore Internet Archive and enjoy the thrills of digging. Enter "Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ" in the search line for best results.

Flickr updates will likely happen in spurts, as I have time to properly organize and identify persons in the photos. Since I do not always have the information about the identity of persons, I ask people to remain courteous and, if possible, to inform me if they can identify certain people. With your help, Project 66-16 can more fully tell about our great heritage to a new generation. And history is still being written as we speak, so ask any questions by emailing me at [michaeltstroud@bellsouth.net](mailto:michaeltstroud@bellsouth.net).

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## Welcome Randy Hyvonen – our new Interim Conference Minister!

Randy is a native of Montana and has spent most of his life in the Midwest and Northwest, except for time at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville. He and his wife, Karen, will settle into temporary quarters in Atlanta after celebrating the 95th birthday of Karen's father in Seattle. Randy will start work in the Conference on July 24. (Actually, he's already meeting with staff and handling some urgent business by telephone.) He already has plans to visit our new church start in Pensacola his first weekend "on the job."

Please join with the Board and me in welcoming Randy to the diversity, charm, and energy of the Southeast Conference.

– Jim Crabb, Moderator of the Southeast Conference



Rev. Hyvonen has the following message to all of us in the Southeast Conference:

“ I'm very pleased to be called to serve as your interim Conference Minister until you call a Designated Conference Minister. Having attended Vanderbilt Divinity School from



1969-1973, I feel that in coming to serve among you I am also reconnecting with parts of my own faith journey (and family history – the first of our 3 children was born in Nashville). And I feel additional ties with you: your previous Conference Minister, the late Roger Knight, succeeded me as the pastor of the inner city church I served for 10 years in Cleveland, then retired to Uplands, where Karen and I have additional friends we've come to know over my years of ministry in the wider UCC.

I hope that my experience of diverse ministries over large geographies will be beneficial for you as we "bridge the gap" together. And I trust that as we work together, God will call us not only to uphold all that has been good about your history but also to grow in new ways!

– Randy

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## Remembering Roger Knight



We are saddened to share the news of the death of Roger Knight on May 22nd. Roger served as conference minister of the Southeast Conference from the fall of 1988 to the spring of 1995. He is survived by his wife Beth, and four children, Steven, Geoffrey, Eric, and Leanne. Roger and Beth have been residents of Uplands Village, Pleasant Hill, TN, since 2009. They have been very active in the life of Uplands village. The memorial service will be held on July 13th at 3pm at Pleasant Hill Community Church. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Beth Knight, PO Box 426 Pleasant Hill, TN 38578.

Roger's ministry in the Southeast Conference was distinguished by a number of compliments. With the assistance of the United Church Board for Homelands Ministries, Roger brought administrative order to the Conference and restructured the staff to be deployed by portfolio rather than geographically. He led the first capital campaign in the history of the Conference, Visions '91, in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Conference. He led the conference in

developing Evangelism Institutes, and brought UCC concerns for racial justice, women's rights, and progressive values more fully into the life of the Southeast Conference. During Roger's ministry the Conference moved its offices from the basement of Central Congregational UCC, into Mid-Town where the offices continue to be located today. Conference Minister Tim Downs said "Roger Knight set in place the foundation upon which the renewal of the Southeast Conference has been built. Without his vision and courage, the ministries that have taken root in the last twenty years would not have been possible. This Conference owes Roger Knight a deep debt of thanks." Following his ministry in the Southeast Conference Roger Knight went on to become pastor of Euclid Avenue Congregational UCC in Cleveland OH, from which he and Beth retired to Pleasant Hill.

Born in 1933, Roger Knight was ordained in the Eau Claire Association of the Wisconsin Conference in 1959. He served as a new church start pastor in Wisconsin, then continued ministry in various settings of the UCC, regionally and nationally for 25 years, before coming to the Southeast Conference.

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## One Response to *Remembering Roger Knight*



**Mary Ruth** June 24, 2013 at 7:44 am #

Memorial Service for Roger Knight is Saturday, July 13, 2013, at 3 pm at Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN.

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## David Sigmund and Jay Greaves Married at General Synod



Members of the Southeast Conference delegation were proud witnesses this past weekend to the ways that God is still speaking in love! On Sunday, June 30, David Sigmund and Jay Greaves were married during General Synod 2013 in Long Beach, Calif. Rev. David Sigmund, who was a Member of Discernment at Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta and is now the pastor of Seaside Community UCC in Long Beach, said, "We didn't want to wait.

We want to live into this reality that our Stillspeaking God is creating in our midst."

Rev. Susannah Davis, pastor of SEC congregation Kirkwood UCC, co-officiated the service with minister and LGBT activist Rev. Mel White of Long Beach. Full of both warmth and prophetic voice, the wedding was conducted via a flash-mob style ceremony on the second level of the Long Beach Conference Center and was witnessed by members of the news media as well as a throng of General Synod participants cheering and singing from the floor below. The service took place just days after the United States Supreme Court returned Proposition 8 to the state of California and the 9th District U.S. Court of Appeals lifted the hold on same-sex weddings.



David and Jay have been together 10 years. While they had already embraced the stance of their UCC faith community, which affirmed marriage equality in 2005, “The validation and legal recognition of our relationship is incredible,” said David.

You can see more pictures from the wedding on the Kirkwood UCC website by clicking here.

If you’d like to send well wishes to the couple please write them a message in the comments below.



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